

How God Changes Our Thinking (Acts 11:1-18)

We all get into mental ruts and often need a whack on the side of the head to jar us into new and better ways of thinking. Also, we all bring a lot of wrong-thinking baggage with us into the Christian life. If we are to grow into being more like Jesus, every once in a while, God has to take a 2x4 and gently whack us on the side of the head to help us change our thinking.

We've seen how the Lord whacked Peter in preparation for his going to the house of the Gentile centurion, Cornelius. No Jew would think of going into a Gentile home, much less eating with Gentiles, for fear of contracting ceremonial defilement. The Lord Jesus had clearly told the apostles to go into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature. But in their centuries-old Jewish way of thinking, the disciples thought that Jesus meant for them to go and preach to Jews who were scattered all over the world. But the thought of preaching the gospel to pagan Gentiles and of those Gentiles coming to salvation without first becoming religious Jews was simply unthinkable.

God's sovereign purpose includes the salvation of some from every nation for His glory.

God prophesied His purpose to Abraham in the first book of the Bible, Genesis 12:3, where He told him, "And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." Later God told him, "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 22:18). That seed of Abraham was not just the Jewish race, but specifically Jesus Christ, God's promised Redeemer. In the last book of the Bible, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fall down before the Lamb and sing, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will reign upon the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10). Thus, God's purpose is to glorify Himself through the salvation of His elect from every nation through the seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss: Missions is not *a* program in the church; it is *the* program of the church.
2. Why is a mono-cultural church ("Baby Boomers," etc.) not biblical? Why should the church be multi-cultural/racial?
3. What are some church traditions that may hinder our outreach to this culture?
4. Is there any wrong thinking that we as a church (or you as an individual) need to change to conform to God's Word?